Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme

Guidance to Applicants, 2015-16
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1: Information about the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Overview of the programme</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The Active Citizens Learning Journey</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Social Action Projects (SAPs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 How to take part in the programme</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 The Residential – FAQs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 International Study Visits</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Intellectual Property Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 2: Applying 9

Including eligibility criteria and how your application will be assessed

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Guidance to applicants

Please read all parts of this Guidance to Applicants carefully before completing your application. The Guidance contains essential information to enable you to decide if you are eligible to apply, to help you find out more about the programme, and to help you to complete the application form correctly.

Contacting us

If you have a question which has not been addressed in the guidance notes, please email us at active.citizens@britishcouncil.org. We regret that we are not able to read through draft applications.

Submitting your application

Applications must be word processed, completed in English, and e-mailed to ActiveCitizensApplic@britishcouncil.org by 23.00 on Sunday 6 September 2015. The scanned signed copy of your reference with the organisation’s letter-head, sent from the organisational email address of the person signing the reference, must arrive by 23.00 on Thursday 10 September 2015.

(Applications sent to active.citizens@britishcouncil.org will also be accepted.)
Section 1: Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme

1. Overview of the programme

The British Council’s Active Citizens programme promotes intercultural dialogue and community-led social development.

The programme began in 2009 and has run in over 40 countries including the UK, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Poland, Burma and the USA.

Through Active Citizens, we bring together people with different beliefs and perspectives to learn from and share with each other. Participants are trained in the skills and knowledge needed to affect social change in their communities, and the programme connects thousands of like-minded people around the world who collectively want to make a fairer and more inclusive society.

We usually work with partner organisations to deliver Active Citizens in communities, and the animation on our homepage gives an introduction to how the programme works.

The Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme runs a little differently, as the training is delivered directly by us, and aims to develop skills and knowledge specifically in individuals who are already working to make life better in their community through positive social action, and to support them in developing networks.

Once participants are trained they will be Active Citizens i.e. learners who are aware and reflective of themselves and the local and global systems they are part of, and aware of how their decisions and actions impact on others and how decisions and actions of others impact them. They are actors who are contributors to their societies and cultures. They are players not spectators, taking positive social action for the benefit of their wider communities. They are influencers who are skilled and motivated to promote trust, understanding and social participation within and between their local and global communities.

The programme encourages peer-to-peer learning across cultural, geographic and political boundaries via a lively online social network of participants, and participants who complete the programme will be eligible to apply for one of three places at an Active Citizens International Study Visit in winter 2015-16.

Active Citizens Participant Profile

The Active Citizens programme involves working with participants who are aged 18 years and over. The Active Citizens participant profile is someone who has:

- a strong sense of local culture and identity
- an established local network (e.g. social, professional, religious)
- interest in learning and broadening horizons
- good communication skills
- a value for fairness and social justice
In addition, a Social Leadership Programme participant will already have some experience, either professionally or through volunteering, of social action in their community.

2. The Active Citizens Learning Journey

The Active Citizens Learning Journey is core to the overall programme. It is based on an exploration of the ways in which people relate to each other and appreciate diversity. It is underpinned by a commitment to social justice, to social inclusion and to enabling people to take the lead in shaping society.

The Learning Journey involves a number of stages, namely:

**Me – Identity and Culture (module 1):** Participants get a better understanding of the concepts of identity and culture and apply their learning to understanding the beliefs, behaviour and attitudes of themselves and other people.

**Me & You – Intercultural Dialogue (module 2):** Participants learn methods of dialogue as a tool for building empathy, trust and understanding within and across cultures.

**We Together – Local and Global Communities (module 3):** Participants develop an understanding of ‘community’ and its relationship with identity and culture. The group apply their learning to their own community to identify the problem they would like to address and the people they need to engage to achieve their objectives.

**Social Action Planning (module 4):** Participants focus on planning a social action initiative in their community, considering the process in different levels of detail and complexity. This involves identifying and clarifying their agenda, a specific intervention and how they will deliver it.

The learning outcomes up to the end of Social Action Planning are achieved using activities from the Active Citizens Toolkit. If you would like to look at some of these, the Toolkit can be downloaded from the Active Citizens website.

3. Social Action Projects (SAPs)

During the workshop the participants will develop their plans for addressing social change in their community. After the workshop we expect each Active Citizens participant to carry out and report on their Social Action Project (SAP), applying the learning they gained in the workshop.
SAPs will take many different forms, as they are designed to tackle a social issue in the particular community in which the Active Citizen lives.

Examples of recent SAPs from around the world include:

- An Active Citizen in London saw internships going to a privileged few, so she set up a work shadowing scheme giving disadvantaged young people access to work shadowing placements in the media.
- A group of Active Citizens in Leeds organized a hike up Mount Snowdon, bringing together people from diverse communities. The day supported community relations, promoted health and wellbeing and enabled participants to experience an inspiring challenge together.
- A group of Active Citizens in a refugee settlement in Sudan initiated a rubbish collection system, creating a network of bins and litter pickers, so that the previously rubbish-strewn camp is now tidy.
- Two Active Citizens in Burma saw a real need for women’s empowerment training, and started a weekly programme educating factory workers about their legal rights.

4. How to take part in the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme

What’s involved?

Participants on the Active Citizens programme must meet the profile outlined in section 1.1, and be willing to commit to all the stages of the programme which include:

- Undertaking the full Residential training programme 29 October – 2 November 2015-16, which will be held in/near Manchester;
- Sharing their learning after the Residential, including with their supporting organisation (ie the organisation providing their reference);
- Developing their own Social Action Project (SAP) or identifying how their new skills can contribute to an existing SAP, and providing a SAP plan and risk assessment to the British Council for approval (November/December 2015)*;
- Spending a minimum of five days on their SAP (January – March 2016);
- Completing the British Council’s monitoring and evaluation processes (see below).

*Participants will be able to join group teleconferences with the SAP mentor after the Residential to get support in planning/working on their Social Action Project.

Participants will be encouraged to register on the Active Citizens Facebook page and to maintain the connections they make at the Residential.

Participants need to make several commitments on being accepted onto the programme, including the commitment to safeguarding children. These commitments are outlined in the Participant Agreement, which can be downloaded from the Active Citizens website.

The Participant Agreement contains the commitments that the British Council and each participant make to each other for the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme.
The Agreement is a formal contract template, as it includes standard terms and conditions that are standard across the British Council. It is phrased in a formal style and some of the contractual terms may be unfamiliar to applicants. If you have any queries or require clarification regarding any aspect of the agreement, please do contact the Active Citizens team.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The British Council collects data about the Active Citizens programme in order to be able to assess and demonstrate its impact.

In order to do this, we collect information from participants at different points of their engagement with the programme:

- baseline information survey;
- evaluation of the Residential;
- follow-up surveys in November 2015, and February, May and November 2016, to see how their social action is going/has gone, and what difference taking part in Active Citizens has made to any other aspects of their life.

5. The Residential – FAQs

Where and when will the Residential be held?
The Residential will be held in/near Manchester, starting at 6pm on Thursday 29 October and finishing at 6pm on Monday 2 November 2015. Most of the training will be held at the Residential venue, and there will also be a local study visit.

How many places are there?
There are 15 places for participants, and we will have a shortlisted waiting list, so that if someone has to withdraw after being offered a place, it can be offered to the next person on the waiting list.

What will be the arrangements for the Residential?
Participants will be accommodated in individual en-suite rooms. All meals will be provided from dinner on Thursday 29 October to afternoon refreshments on Monday 2 November. Meals will include vegetarian and halal options. Local travel during the Residential programme will also be paid for. Participants will need to pay for any extra costs they incur at the venue e.g. for telephone calls, laundry, bar drinks/snacks.

Is there a fee to take part?
There’s no fee for this programme, but participants will need to arrange and pay for their travel to and from the Residential. (Participants who would struggle to pay for their travel may apply for support from a small travel fund.)

Can my partner/children accompany me to the Residential?
Due to the nature of the training it is essential that participants are able to focus fully on the workshops, and to take the opportunity during free time to reflect on their learning and to network with their fellow participants. For these reasons the Active Citizens team will not make arrangements for participants’ partners or children to stay
with them at the venue or join the workshops, and participants are asked not to be accompanied to the Residential. If a participant requires a carer/assistant to accompany them so that they can fully access the workshops, they are asked to make this clear on the Additional Information form.

6. International Study Visits

International Study Visits (ISVs) are week-long events where an international group visits a country and particular communities to explore social development issues and the methods the community has found for addressing these issues. The country partners play a key role in setting up the itinerary and hosting the visit. During the week, participants share skills, knowledge and experiences from their local communities. They take part in workshops, community visits and political and civic engagement. Powerful bonds formed between the participants often lead to collaborative social-action plans.

Participants from the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme will have the opportunity to apply to participate in an ISV in winter 2015-16. This may be held in the UK or abroad. Three participants will be chosen to attend on merit. On their return they will share their learning with the organisation supporting their application, wider community and the Active Citizens network.

The British Council pays for travel to and from the ISV, necessary vaccinations and visas if required, and for accommodation, meals, local travel and workshops during the ISV. Participants are responsible for any other costs incurred.

7. Intellectual property rights

The Active Citizens Toolkit is an evolving toolkit of learning content. It incorporates content developed by the British Council and in conjunction with a wide range of partners and facilitators in the UK and around the world. The toolkit content grows with each cycle of the Active Citizens programme as it is adapted and contextualised by our partner organisations. The British Council retains copyright over materials produced in conjunction with the toolkit. We welcome participants on the Social Leadership Programme incorporating elements of the toolkit into their social action project, but they must contact the British Council for permission first and acknowledge British Council copyright of the toolkit and Learning Journey. For the avoidance of doubt, participants and their supporting organisations shall not be permitted to adapt, modify or sell the Active Citizens Toolkit or use all or part of the Active Citizens programme resources in any way for commercial gain.
Section 2: Applying to take part

1. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to apply to the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme, individuals must:

- be aged 18 or over on 1 September 2015;
- live in the UK (ie residing in the UK from the point of submitting their application until or beyond the end of the programme in March 2016);
- agree to the commitments that would come with being accepted onto the course, including the commitment to safeguarding children and the need (if their Social Action Project will involve under 18s or vulnerable adults) to provide a valid enhanced disclosure check from the past three years, including a check against the adults’ barred list or the children’s barred list, undertaken through the UK Disclosure & Barring Service, or the equivalent local service;
- have a reference from an organisation that knows them well (this could be their employer, the academic institution at which they’re studying or an organisation with which they volunteer) and that organisation is supporting no more than two applicants to this programme;
- not have been a participant, facilitator or project co-ordinator on the Active Citizens programme in the past.

In addition, applications must:

- be received by the deadline for applications (23.00 on Sunday 6 September 2015)
- be complete
- be word processed and completed in English
- be followed up by a scanned copy with the organisation’s letter-head of the signed reference from an organisation that knows the applicant well (please see section 2.4), emailed by the signatory from their organisational email address, to be received by the deadline for references (23.00 on Thursday 10 September 2015)
- be signed (applicants can insert their electronic signature, or they can print the final page, sign it and send a photo/scan of that page along with the rest of their application)

3. Completing your application

Please check that you meet all the eligibility criteria before you submit your application, or your application may be rejected. The British Council will conduct eligibility checks and if your application is not eligible it will not be forwarded for full technical assessment.

Please check that you have filled in the application form correctly before submission. Make sure that you have filled in every section and provided the information requested. Your information should be as accurate as possible.
Please complete all sections of the application form fully as it will be assessed as it stands. The British Council will not contact you for replacement/further information if parts of your form are missing or left blank (but may contact you over minor issues if these can be corrected quickly).

You can find out more about the Active Citizens programme on our website and social media sites:
Website: http://www.britishcouncil.org/active-citizens
Facebook: www.facebook.com/activecitizens
Twitter: http://twitter.com/activecitizens

4. Reference from supporting organisation

Each applicant must have a reference from an organisation that has known the applicant long enough to be able to write confidently about their character, skills and experience. This organisation could be the employer of the applicant, the academic institution at which they are studying, or an organisation with/for whom the applicant volunteers.

A template reference form is available to download from our website.

The reference must be printed with the organisation’s letter-head and should:

- outline how the applicant is known to the organisation, and for how long
- comment on why the applicant would be a good participant in the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme (it may be helpful to read the Active Citizens participant profile in section 1.1 of this Guidance first)

The reference must be signed by someone within the organisation who has the authority to do so.

Please note that an organisation may support no more than two applicants to the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme in 2015–16.

Applicants and their supporting organisations should be aware that references are subject to the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and if the British Council received a Subject Access Request about a reference from an organisation, in most cases we would disclose it.

5. Submitting your application

Applications and scanned references must be received by the stated deadline. We regret that applications received after the deadline of **23.00 on Sunday 6 September 2015** cannot be accepted.
The scanned signed reference with the organisation’s letter-head, emailed from the organisational email address of the person signing the reference, must arrive no later than **23.00 on Thursday 10 September 2015.**

6. How your application will be assessed

The eligibility of applications will be assessed first, against the criteria listed in section 2.1.

All eligible applications will then be sent for technical assessment against the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates meeting the participant profile (as outlined in section 1.1)
2. Demonstrates working/having worked to make life in their community better through positive social action
3. Understands what the Active Citizens programme is about and shares the programme’s vision
4. Has concrete plans for sharing what they have learnt, including with their supporting organisation
5. Has thought about the type of Social Action Project that they might work on

Priority weighting will be applied to criteria 1 and 2. A low score in one or more criteria may result in the application being rejected at the technical assessment stage.

The information in the reference about why the applicant would be a good participant on the programme will be considered in addition to the information in the application form.

The technical assessment will be carried out by British Council staff members with technical understanding of the Active Citizens UK and global programme.

A selection panel will make the final decision on places awarded. We are looking for a balance of participants and with this in mind, the selection panel will be asked to ensure that:

- there is a geographic spread of participants from across the UK
- participants have varied areas of experience

Up to 15 participants will be selected to take part in the Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme in 2015–16.

The outcome of the selection process is final. However, we welcome comments on the application and selection process. Unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback on their application.
7. Timings and communication

You will receive an e-mail acknowledging receipt of your application within one week of it being received by the Active Citizens team.

You will be informed of the outcome of your application by **Wednesday 30 September 2015**.

8. If your application is unsuccessful

If your application is unsuccessful you will receive an e-mail informing you of this as soon as possible after the selection panel, within the deadline given above. This will include feedback on your application, although we regret that we cannot provide detailed feedback.

9. If your application is successful

If your application is successful you will receive an e-mail informing you as soon as possible after the selection panel, within the deadline given above.

At the same time you will be sent:

- the Participant Agreement, including the child protection self-declaration form, to be signed by you
- a baseline information survey (optional)
- Residential registration form
- Residential Joining Instructions
- photography consent form (optional)

You must:

- return the completed documents by **Wednesday 7 October 2015** in order to confirm your place on the course.

**Good luck with your application!**